

## **Traditional Homeland of the Tamils -Fact or Fiction**

Extracts from the submissions to the Sansoni Commission, 1979

The basis for 'Ealam' is that the Tamils should have a separate state consisting of what the Tamil United Liberation Front (herein-after called TULF) say is 'the traditional homeland of the Tamils'. I shall show you, Sir, that there is no such thing as the "Traditional Homeland of the Tamils" As far as Sri Lanka is concerned the traditional homeland of the Tamils is the whole of Sri Lanka just as much as Sri Lanka is the traditional homeland of the Sinhala people and of the Burghers, the Moors, the Malays, and every other minority community living in this land. Just because there are concentrations of minorities in various parts of the country, and this must happen because human beings with similar interests, similar religions, and generally related to one another tend to cluster together and form an integrated unit. Such portion of the country cannot be called a "traditional homeland ". Thus the Moors have their own communities in Kalmunai, Beruwala, Batticaloa, Malvana, Thihariya and other places. They are generally the descendants of the Arab traders who came to this country. It cannot therefore be said that these portions are 'the traditional homeland' of this community. Bambalapitiya and Wellawatta contained at one time a large number of Burghers. Therefore could one say that this was the traditional homeland of the Burghers? As a community they do not exist in any other country except Ceylon and in fact there would be Burghers who will reject such a traditional homeland for them, just as much as there are Tamils who would reject Jaffna as a 'traditional homeland'. The Malays are mostly found in Slave Island but they will not say that Slave Island is their traditional homeland. I say therefore that the name 'traditional homeland' is a misnomer.

Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam:

According to Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam, the distinguished Tamil who

was the first Ceylonese to be admitted to the Ceylon Civil Service and a barrister-at-law of Lincoln's Inn, in a lecture entitled "Sketches of Ceylon History" delivered under the presidency of His Excellency the then Governor of Ceylon, Sir Henry Blake, on the 30th January, 1906 in the Legislative Chamber in Colombo, 'after the time of King Dutugemunu, that is after the defeat of the Tamil King Elara (p.18) "the Tamils proved a never failing source of harassment. They made frequent incursions into Ceylon, and Tamil Kings often sat on Vijaya's throne". In 104 B.C. they even took away the most precious treasure in Ceylon, the begging bowl of the Buddha. "Sometimes the tide of invasion was rolled back into South India, as by King Gajabahu, who in 113 A.D. brought back a multitude of Sinhala captives that the Tamil King had taken and also a number of Tamil captives, whom he settled in Aluthkuru Korale, in the Colombo District, and in Harispattu and Thumpane of the Kandy District and in parts of the Kurunegala District". There is no mention by so distinguished a Tamil like Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam of a single Tamil having been settled in the northern portions of Sri Lanka or in what is now called the "traditional homeland" of the Tamils". These frequent incursions into Ceylon by the Tamils of India and their taking away of the precious begging bowl of the Buddha highlights the fear the Sinhala people have of establishing 'a traditional homeland' of the Tamils within swimming distance of the Tamil Nadu. Even today the Tamils run to Tamil Nadu for propaganda and help and make no bones about saying that they will go for foreign help. Jaffna town is strewn with statues of the heroes of Tamil Nadu. Have they erected one for a Sinhala person from their true homeland? This indeed is a contrast to Colombo where there are statues of Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam and Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan and streets named after Tamils like Ananda Coomaraswamy and Sir Chittampalam Gardiner. The Tamils of today must surely be asked to change their attitude towards the Sinhalese people. They must look to Sri Lanka and not to India for their mentors.

Coming back to history it was in the year 237 B.C. as Sir Ponnambalam says that the troubles of the Vijayan dynasty began with the usurpation of the throne at

Anuradhapura by Sena Guttika; a Tamil who occupied the throne for 25 years and was dethroned and slain and the original dynasty restored. Some time later came the Tamil King Elara. Sena Guttika is called Senan Kuddikan and Elara is Elalan, in the T.U.L.F. manifesto which makes out that these persons ruled over the whole of Ceylon. Here is a twisting of history.

According to Sir Ponnambalam Ceylon was then divided into three, Pihiti or Raja Rata, that is the royal region North of the Mahaweliganga with its capital at Anuradhapura, Maya Rata in the middle bounded by the Deduru Oya and Kaluganga with its capital at Kelaniya, and Ruhunu Rata in the south with the Mahaveli Ganga and Kalu Ganga on its north. Vihara Maha Devi, the daughter of King Kelani Tissa was married to King Kavan Tissa of Ruhunu Rata. She had as one of her sons Dutu Gemunu who killed King Elara in single combat and ruled the whole of Sri Lanka: Pihiti Rata by conquest, Maya Rata by maternal inheritance and Ruhunu Rata by right of succession from his father. This was the first time that Sri Lanka came under one sovereignty. Neither Senan Kuddikan nor Elalan ruled the whole of Lanka. How could they when there were separate kings ruling Maya Rata and Ruhunu Rata and the king of Ruhunu Rata actually went to war with Elara and killed him?

After king Dutugemunu there was a long line of Sinhala kings and the country prospered till in the eleventh century A.D. Anuradhapura had to be abandoned to the Tamils and the Capital transferred to Polonnaruwa. In spite of the Tamil inroads the country prospered under Parakrama Bahu the Great who ruled from Polonnaruwa and under the Sinhala kings so that, according to Sir Ponnambalam, "even a woman might traverse the island with a precious jewel and not be asked what it was." According to Sir Ponnambalam it was not long before Polonnaruwa too had to be abandoned to the Tamils who now came from Kalinga "like the giants of Mara they destroyed the kingdom and the religion of the land. Alas! Alas! The whole island resembled a dwelling in flames or a house darkened by funeral rites". The uneasy seat of government had to be shifted from

time to time to Dambadeniya, Yapahuwa, Kurunegala, Gampola, Kotte, Sitawaka and finally Kandy. While the kings of Kandy resisted the foreign invaders till the Kandyan Kingdom was finally ceded to the British in 1825.

In the fifteenth century the Kingdom of Jaffna came under the direct rule of the King of Kandy with his seat at Gampola and the power of the Ariya Chakravarti was broken by Alakesvara. Then in the 17th century according to Sir Ponnambalam the tooth relic of the Buddha was taken by the Tamil King of Jaffna from whom it was taken by the Portuguese on the capture of Jaffna. This defeat of the Tamils is admitted by the modern Tamils. Thus it will be seen that what the Buddhists fear is not only that the Tamils will lay waste the country from their seat at Ealam but take away their most precious religious possessions- the Bowl and Tooth. Already they are destroying Bo Trees, one at Seruwawila where they have erected a kovil and another at Trincomalee in the premises of the Konneswaram Temple. This could only have been done by Tamil Hindus. Now this site remains completely covered by a thick layer of concrete.

It is said that the kingdom of Jaffna was established in the 13th century and absorbed into the Pandyan Empire. (Kingdom of Jaffna by Pathmanathan p.160) Previous to that it is accepted that there was no separate Kingdom of Jaffna and our king at Anuradhapura or other capital ruled over the whole of Sri Lanka. According to the T.U.L.F. manifesto the Portuguese subdued the state of Tamil Ealam and for several centuries before the advent of the Europeans to Ceylon in the 16th century the Tamils had been living in this territory as their won kingdom- here the manifesto ignores Alakeswara and also Sapumal Kumaraya later Bhuvaneka Bahu of Kotte who ruled Jaffna.

When extraordinary claims are made with regard to the kingdom of Jaffna it must be remembered that this king of Jaffna always acknowledged the suzerainty of the kings of Kandy or Kotte. The T.U.L.F. manifesto says that in the 13th century there emerged a stable political fact:- The territory stretching on the

Western Sea Board from Chilaw to Puttalam to Mannar and then to the Northern regions and in the East Trincomalee and Baticaloa up to Kumana was established as the exclusive homeland of the Tamils. This is the territory of Tamil Ealam, and as I have pointed out earlier and will show in this memorandum this statement is entirely incorrect.

A Portugese, de Queyroz (Book I p.101, states that when the Portugese first came to the island it was divided into 5 kingdoms, 'that of Cota to which all others were tributary acknowledging the King as Emperor.' One of these kingdoms was Jaffnapatam. This was in the year 1505. According to Phillipus Baldaeus, a Dutchman, the Netherlanders were not in peaceful possession of Ceylon after the conquest of Colombo harbour and Jaffnapatam in the years 1656 and 1658. According to de Queyroz the kingdom of Jaffna was tributary to king of Cotta and Baldaeus states that Rajasinghe styled himself "Emperor of Ceylon, King of Kandy, Kotte, Seetawaka, Dambadeniya, Anuradhapura, Jaffnapatam, prince of Uva, Matara, Denavaka, the four Korales, Grand Duke of the 7 Korales, Matale Count of Kottiar, Trincomalee, Batocaloa, Wellassa, Binntenna, Dumbara, Pansiyapattu, Hewaheta, Puttalam,etc.,". That this was a correct statement is borne out by the fact that Knox was captured at Kottiar in about 1600 and was taken to king Rajasinghe at Kandy. Knox an Englishman, was captured by the soldiers of the king of Kandy, so that Trincomalee was then under the king of Kandy. Here we have the testimony of a Tamil, a Portugese, a Dutchman and an Englishman that the kingdom of Jaffna was not independent of the king of Kotte of Kandy. So that when the T.U.L.F. Menifeato states that for several centuries before the advent of the Europeans to Ceylon in the 16th century the Tamils had been living in this country under their own kingdom, it is in direct contradiction of Sir Ponnambalam, de Queyroz, Baldaeus and Knox. A Tamil, a Portugese a Dutchman and Englishman. This is another twisting of history.

Before I complete placing before you the correct History of Sri Lanka it is necessary for me to refer to another fact. According to Sir Ponnambalam "the

primitive history of Ceylon is enveloped in fable, yet there is perhaps no country in the world that has such a long continuous history and civilization." Sir Ponnambalam was speaking in 1906 but in 1916 there appeared certain articles in the "Ceylon Antiquary". They are a series of articles on 'Sinhalese Place Names in the Jaffna Peninsula' written by B.Horsburgh of the Ceylon Civil Service. Reverend S.Gnana Prakasar who is an acknowledged authority on Dravidian history, J.P.Lewis C.M.G. and C.C.S. with replies by them and finally by S.W.Coomaraswamy, who according to Horsburgh painstakingly and thoroughly investigated the subject of Tamil place names.

As I am submitting the articles I am not quoting them in extensor but will draw your attention to certain facts. Horsburgh says that he was told that there was no written record of any kind showing a Sinhala occupation of Jaffna peninsula antecedent to the Tamil period. The beginnings of the Tamil period itself are shrouded in obscurity, but he says the Sinhalese occupied the northern portion of the mainland, which is now Tamil country and of that there is ample evidence carved in stone all over the Mannar and Mullaitivu districts and the fact that they were settled also in the Jaffna peninsula before the Tamils came consists mainly of the evidence furnished by the place names they have left behind them, corroborated by the very few stone relics that have been found. For instance he says that one of the most common endings of Sinhala place names is Gama or Gamuwa meaning 'village'. The Tamil form of this is Kamam, for instance Kathir Kamam for Katharagama.

We note with regret that today persons and parties, without honestly facing the offensiveness of such a concept like the traditional homeland of the Tamils, attempt with political ingenuity to smuggle in the same idea thinly veiled and deliberately camouflaged, with a play on the words. It is presentably submitted to read as historical habitat. Whether one calls a spade a spade or an agricultural implement, you will be doing with it exactly what it is intended to do.

One does not know the historical antiquity of what goes by the name of habitat here, but we do know that the Chinese Buddhist travellers who visited us about the fifth and sixth centuries A.D. knew no more of the name of this island country apart from its being SINHALA or as they termed it in their language as Seng-chia-lo, a name which they also translated as the land of the lion people or Shih-tse-kuo.